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ABSTRACT

A pilot program at Colorado State University tested three factors in the collaboration between the University and a local school district. The three factors were: (1) the ability to place student teachers with cooperating teachers using the specially developed "Elements of Instruction" program in the classroom; (2) the effect of a field based methods sequence; and (3) the value of activities designed to improve the transition into full time student teaching. Student teachers, cooperating teachers, and college of education faculty responded to a survey concerning attitudes toward the pilot program. The last two factors were judged to be highly effective, although improvement was still needed for both areas. Collaboration increased significantly because of the program (CB)

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A SCHOOL DISTRICT - UNIVERSITY MODEL FOR COLLABORATION

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Several years ago, B. O. Smith, in a presentation at the ATE Conference in Dallas, called for major improvements in the preparation of teachers. This speech was a forerunner of the educational reform movement that was launched by the National Commission on Excellence in Education report, "Nation at Risk". Over thirty national and countless state reports have followed, many of them recommending changes in teacher preparation programs.

One of the most promising recommendations has been the development of an improved partnership between colleges and universities preparing teachers and schools providing field based components and eventually hiring the new teachers. This article will describe collaborative efforts between a public school district and a university that illustrate the value of such relationships.

The collaborative efforts have been developed based on one very important assumption: the primary responsibility of the public school district is to educate students from ages 5-18. Any work in pre-service training is secondary to that responsibility and will occur 1) if K-12 students benefit from additional resources and experiences professional in training may provide, 2) if career teachers can benefit from professional development activities that occur as a result of collaborative activity, and 3) as a responsibility to assist in preparing competent teachers to join the profession.

Colorado State University has had a close working relationship with Poudre R#1, the local school district, located in Fort Collins, for many years. Examples of cooperation include placement of student teachers and teacher aides, graduate programs and college credit for in-service programs, an interchange of committee memberships, resource people for classes, advance placement opportunities for students, and much

cooperation in sharing instructional resources. Interaction involving the teacher certification program at Colorado State University, a land grant institution of 18,000 students, is only one part of the traditional town and gown relationship.

Poudre R#1 school district enrolls approximately 16,000 students in an area of 1765 square miles. Fort Collins, a city of approximately 72,000, is the principal city in the school district and is located 60 miles north of the Denver metropolitan area in northern Colorado.

The Department of Education at Colorado State University provides a secondary certification (7-12) program in English, foreign language, industrial science technology, mathematics, science, social studies and speech and K-12 certification in art, music and physical education. Between one hundred fifty to two hundred students are recommended for certification each year. A majority of the field experiences in pre-service training and about one third of the student teaching placements are provided in the Poudre R#1 school district in three high schools, five junior high schools and twenty-five elementary schools.

The teacher certification program at Colorado State University requires students to complete a degree in an academic department plus a minimum of twenty seven semester hours in education. The program consists of ten semester credits of foundation courses to be completed during the sophomore and junior years, and a seventeen credit professional semester. The professional semester is divided into two components; the first seven weeks in university classes in methods and evaluation and the remaining twelve weeks (ending with the public school semester) in student teaching. K-12 programs vary from this format by requiring all methods and evaluation courses to be completed the semester before student teaching, followed by a full semester of student teaching, part in an elementary setting and part in secondary.

The special collaborative effort this paper will describe began in 1983 when both the school district and the Education Department focused on the implementation of the Elements of Instruction as the primary focus for pre and in service instruction respectively. Although begun independently, there was considerable interaction between school district and education faculty. The school district contracted with Carol Cummings, Madeline Hunter, and other consultants to impact the administrative and professional staff, and invited faculty members from the Education Department to attend meetings and workshops. Additional materials were shared and a joint committee was appointed to discuss potential for future collaboration.

In 1984, a pilot student teaching program was developed that focused on implementation of the Elements of Instruction into the methods courses and student teaching. A second feature of the pilot was an effort to improve the transition into full time student teaching by making the methods courses partially field based. Concurrently, the school district continued to incorporate the Elements of Instruction into the in-service program. Fourteen student teachers were involved fall semester and seventeen spring semester.

The pilot program combined a heavy emphasis on the Elements of Instruction with a field based model. Student teachers spent the full semester in their student teaching assignment, spending approximately two hours a day in their schools and four hours a day in university methods classes for the first seven weeks, and the remaining eleven weeks of the semester (public school calendar) in full time student teaching.

The design of the pilot program was to test three factors: the ability to place student teachers with cooperating teachers trained in and effectively using the Elements of Instruction in their classrooms, the effect of a field based methods sequence, and the value of activities that were designed to improve the transition into full time student teaching.

Data were collected formally by survey and informally through observation and discussion during the 1984-85 school year.

The first factor tested was the ability to select cooperating teachers knowledgeable in and effectively using the Elements of Instruction. This did not prove possible because although most of the district administrative staff had completed some in-service training, very few teachers had been impacted. That is not to say that many cooperating teachers weren't using many of the effective instructional techniques, but only a small number were able to effectively reinforce the specific methods taught in the on-campus courses. This is changing, though, as the District continues to provide inservice activities and encourage change through the supervisory and evaluative process.

The second factor examined was the effect of the field based component on reinforcing the methods classes taught on campus. Although the Elements of Instruction was not reinforced as effectively as planned due to the limited number of cooperating teachers trained, the field base activities were viewed by both student teachers and cooperating teachers as very effective. All student teachers reported they preferred the field based model. The field based group's perceptions of their readiness to begin full time student teaching after seven weeks was considerably higher than the control group, although their confidence in planning and management was very similar.

Table I
Self Perceptions of Preparation for Student Teaching
5 = high, 1 = low

	Field Based Group N = 15	Traditional Group N = 15
Readiness to begin student teaching	4.2	3.0
Confidence in ability to manage the classroom	3.7	3.5

Confidence in ability to plan instruction	4.0	3.9

Cooperating teachers involved in the program fall semester were asked to determine the value of the field based program in comparison to previous experiences. They had worked with a total of 37 student teachers, an average of nearly 4 per teacher. Table II reports their assessment.

Table II
Cooperating Teacher Evaluation of the Field Based Program
N = 11
5 = very valuable, 1 = not valuable

1. Working in a class for the full 18 week semester	4.9
2. Familiarization with routines before beginning full time student teaching	5.0
3. Value of the effort to improve transition into full time student teaching	4.4

Cooperating teachers were nearly unanimous in reporting the field experiences were very valuable to the preparation of the student teacher.

The third factor tested, improving the transition into student teaching, was successful based on the assessment of the cooperating teachers. As reported in Table II, all respondents considered the transition activities to be valuable when compared to previous experiences.

Three university faculty members were involved with the two semester pilot project. They reported the following reactions on the previously identified factors. First, when cooperating teachers did not reinforce the methodologies presented in campus based classes, the student teachers, given a positive relationship with the cooperating teacher was most likely to adopt the methods and style modeled by the cooperating teacher. Likewise, when the university classes and cooperating teacher focused primarily on one format--the Elements of Instruction in this pilot project--the student

teacher nearly always modeled the demonstrated techniques. This reinforces what most methods teachers and supervisors of student teachers have known or suspected for some time, and illustrates the importance of a common base for pre and inservice training.

The field based focus created by having student teachers working in the classroom one or two hours a day and attending classes on campus three or four hours a day had both negative and positive effects. On the positive side, motivation for learning specific techniques was high and the opportunity to reality test what they were learning with real students was valuable. One negative outcome, totally unexpected, was how quickly the student teachers shifted their loyalty and identification to the school classroom and "their" students. On many occasions, the university classes became lower priority when student teachers were faced with preparing lessons or checking papers. It was also apparent that things presented that were not readily relevant to immediate classroom responsibilities had minimal impact, no matter how significant they might be later on.

The third aspect, transition into student teaching was greatly enhanced by the field experiences, although the additional experience did not, in itself, guarantee success. Problems were more quickly identified but the experiences in and of themselves were not the solution to content deficiencies, inadequate techniques, or personality problems.

Collaboration in 1985-86 has increased significantly, partially as a result of the pilot project and partially due to leadership in both the school district and education faculty. There is continued emphasis on implementation of the Elements of Instruction (as well as other effective teaching techniques) by both the school district and Education Department faculties. Discussions have been held and a long range plan agreed to that at some point in the near future only teachers effectively using the

desired techniques and committed to assisting new professionals will be assigned student teachers. It has been suggested that this become a part of a career ladder concept the district is planning.

The correlation between pre and inservice training has been enhanced by the University's contracting with the school district for a full time teacher to work in the undergraduate methods courses. This staff member has served in a liaison position and has help influence and reinforce the effective teaching concepts supported by both institutions.

Based on the results of the pilot project on improving the transition into student teaching, all student teachers now spend one full day each week in their student teaching position during the six weeks the methods and evaluation classes are taught on campus. Although there is mixed reaction to the full day experience when compared to one or two periods daily, the overall evaluation is that the experience is valuable and is a contributing force in providing a positive teaching experience.

Plans for 1986-87 call for the school district and university to hire a person to work half time in the school district as a "trainer of trainers" in the staff development program and half time in the Education Department to teach instructional leadership in the graduate program and help develop a more effective undergraduate methods curriculum.

Additionally, discussion continues on the continuation of the present contract position as well as exploring ways that university faculty could teach periodically in public school classes to continue to update experience.

The collaborative program described in the paper has the potential to impact the preparation of teachers at Colorado State University more than any previous efforts.

The preliminary success has encouraged discussion with two additional school districts in the area to explore the potential for other collaborative efforts.

Just as field experiences in and of themselves do not guarantee the preparation of good teachers, a collaborative program will not guarantee success for all involved. The potential for impact lay in the synergistic power that emerges when strong organizations enter into agreements that encourage a collaborative working relationship with a common goal.